

# ANN'S CHRISTMAS GIFT.

They ain't no use denyin' that w'en Christmas time is nigh  
A feller feels a sorter kind ter ev'ry one thet's by  
He min's the monkey-shinin' the Christmas gits  
Thee use ter be w'en he's a boy er right smart spelt ago  
Afore his firs' gits w'en he was a boy er right smart spelt ago  
T'war on a Christmas eve'nin' that Ann an' me was in  
It's a long year back but still t' passion's words I mind  
T'war all about obeyin' an' you kin hear me sayin'  
Ann tuk them firs' gits, an' she has been a happy wife  
An' paid her dues an' keepin' with er right hard workin' life  
I don't hev fancies often, but I'd raly like ter night  
Ter buy a Christmas gift fer Ann thet wouldn't cost er sight  
I'd raly like ter do it  
An' I won't lose nothin' th'os it  
Fer she'll feel as if she oughter pay me back in savin' ways  
An' sen' more eggs an' butter, too, to town on market days  
I take four yard o' dark blue jeans, er though I'll spring is lyar  
I won't be needin' t'rouse—these I hev er putty  
An' 'bout ten yard o' shirtn' stuff, I reckon won't be hurtin'  
Even if it lays er spell tell Ann kin see her way  
Ter make it up in shirtn' for me ter wear on meetin' days  
Oh, Ann 'll be ermighty proud ter know I've thought on her  
I on'y wist I'd tried myse'f to please her  
Law, w'en she spots that mailin'  
Up an' say, "Oh, L'phale, 't's come a hus' n' man"  
Any woman had fer husban' since this year'n o' ourn began'  
—Eva Wilder McJannet in Judge.

# A CLOSE CALL.

While on a business trip in the West some years ago I halted one night at a small town in the Mississippi bottom, the name of which I cannot at this moment recall. The village covered a small knoll, "ridge," and was surrounded by dense timber on all sides, excepting where it overlooked the "Father of Waters." As the railway would not at all times accommodate me, I had purchased a horse and outfit, and traveled in this way. I had put up at the only inn the place afforded, and having partaken of a hearty supper of "venison," which I to this day believe was coon (mainly because my host swore so forcibly to the contrary), I lit my pipe and sauntered into the bar-room, and, reclining myself on a soap box by the stove, for the night was cool, and watched the villagers struggle in to enjoy their evening pipe and yarn.

In an hour or so the room was well filled, both with men and smoke, and the audience seemed complete. With the exception of myself and the landlord, who had joined us and who occupied the position of state, viz.: a soap-box on top of the counter, they were all either river or backwoods men, and a rough though jovial set of fellows. For some time we all smoked in silence, when suddenly, and without warning, an old fellow with a grizzled gray beard and a mop of tangled hair, partly covered by a coon-skin cap, knocked the ashes out of his pipe, refilled and lighted it, and span a yarn of great length and more or less interest. When he had concluded there was a recess to be taken, after which two or three of the others entertained us with homely narratives of their adventures, and, of course, the attendant "whistle-wettings" after each one.

There had been, during the first yarn, a new arrival in the camp. He had come in quietly and had seated himself on the remaining box, directly under the swinging lamp. His entrance had attracted but little attention; but now, during a comparative lull after the last story, I could see that he was an object of interest by all in the room. The new-comer was a tall and powerfully built man, roughly clad, with a handsome, honest face, covered by a thick, black beard, over which his eyes twinkled merrily. What gave him an old-fashioned appearance, attracted our attention was the old-fashioned sloping of his left shoulder, and his long hair, which was almost snow-white. I whispered to my neighbor and learned that the man was a stranger and had never been seen in "these parts" before. In the midst of our silent speculations as to who and what the new-comer was, the old fellow, who had spun the introductory yarn, suddenly cleared his throat and pipe at the same time, and said:

"Parlon me, stranger, but yer 'pearance indicates that ye might, at some time in yer life hev come through a pritty tuff tussel. Would ye mind spin'n us a yarn fer our edyfication?" The stranger smiled, good-naturedly, and, in a pleasant, soft, replied:

"Not much at all, tellin' stories, but if the boys care to listen I'll relate my closest call; where I got my white hair and this—" and he pointed sorrowfully to his maimed shoulder. Instantly the room was filled with "Heard hear!" and "Go on, pard!" etc., for all were anxious to hear his story, but at this juncture the landlord stood up on the counter, waved his hand majestically and shouted:

"Hold on, gentles! on. No stranger tell a new story 'till er old Jake's roof with a dry whistle." All step up—everybody; Jake treats."

rather moodily, I thought, for his face was no longer smiling and his eyes were filled with a look of sadness. "Well, boys," he continued, "it was Christmas morning—I'll never forget it. The wind was howling like mad, and the snow was drifted nearly over the cabin. I hesitated about starting out, and my wife begged me to stay at home; but I had not lost a day yet, and the risk being scared out by the weather. So, promising to return early for our Christmas turkey—a wild one I had shot in the woods—I shouldered my outfit and heavy rifle and, with a chery adieu, scampered off through the blinding snow.

"After a sharp struggle through the drifts I reached my clearing, which was more protected from the wind, and, by walking briskly, I managed to keep comfortably warm. I was much interested in my work; besides, my mind was filled with bright dreams of the future, and, before I realized it, I saw from a dull red spot in the west that it was nearly sunset and that night was already settling.

"Hastily gathering my implements together I ran to the tree where I had leaned my rifle, when, to my horror, I discovered that a huge limb from a tree that I had felled had bounded on striking the ground, and, falling upon my trusty weapon, had crushed it almost beyond recognition and rendered it utterly useless.

"I paused for a moment, bewildered at this sudden misfortune, but the rapidly gathering darkness aroused me, and leaving the fragments of my gun behind, I hastened toward home. As I neared the edge of my little clearing the setting sun shone for a moment through a rift in the clouds, and I then noticed what I had passed many times before without a thought; that is, my humble abode—a smooth staff of tough oak about three inches thick and some fourteen feet long, mounted on one end with an iron ferrule and a powerful steel head, like a spear, used by lumbermen for handling logs, but which I had found useless to me, and had leaned against a tree many months ago and had quite forgotten.

"What possessed me I do not know; but almost unconsciously I moved out of my path toward it, and, as I stepped on it, and, as it was, I shouldered it, and it hastened on. "Although I had many times before," he continued, after another pause, "traveled the same path in the dusk without the slightest fear—although armed—yet this night I was filled with a strange dread and actually trembled at every sound.

"I was plowing swiftly along, keeping as sharp a lookout as the gloom would permit, and had probably made half the distance I had to travel, when I was suddenly frozen to the earth by a long piercing wall that rose through the woods from behind me. I had heard it before, and instantly recognized it as the cry of a panther. He had evidently scented me and was making his way toward me by leaping from limb to limb and tree to tree overhead.

"For an instant I remained rooted to the spot; then recognizing my perilous position, for I was practically weaponless, I turned frantically forward, hoping to gain the opening before he could overtake me. As I made my first leap that awful cry again rang through the forest, and this time almost opposite me on my left, and I concluded at once he was trying to get ahead of me. Madly I struggled on, still keeping my path—which the trees I had 'blazed' made quite plain in the semi-darkness, and for the next few minutes my enemy was silent—an awful, ominous silence. But I hoped against hope that he had missed the scent, and, gaining fully alive me on every side I kept on.

"Through the trees ahead of me I could now see the opening and a dim light in my cabin window. An exultant laugh was just rising to my lips when the moon, which had just risen over the tree tops, suddenly broke through the clouds, and great God! a long, little form shot through the air and lit with a heavy thud on a gigantic limb that stretched across my path almost directly above me.

"My laugh of joy changed to a moan of terror. My teeth chattered. I could neither move nor cry out, but like one stricken, stood and gazed helplessly into those flaming, fabled eyes that gleamed down from the limb some twenty-five feet above me.

"In those few seconds countless thoughts flashed through my brain—home, wife, my bright dreams of the future, and the terrible death I was about to die. Softly the cat-like paws moved on and down on the limb, into which I could see him now and then bury his long, cruel claws, while he lashed his long tail to and fro, sending down showers of fine snow from his lofty perch.

"To move meant instant death, but my time at best was short, for at this moment I saw the huge creature raise himself slowly and draw his feet together for the awful leap. I threw my eyes heavenward for a last silent prayer, and as I did so I saw the steel tip of my rifle, which I had unconsciously held upright in my hand, glint in the moonlight.

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We have the largest assortment to be found in this city, and are pleased to show goods. OUR USUAL LOW PRICES PREVAIL.

## GEO. W. RICH,

717 Market Space.

**MERRY CHRISTMAS**

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